

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

DBT is a treatment approach pioneered by Linehan (2001) which combines Cognitive Behavioral therapy techniques for emotion regulation and reality-testing with concepts of distress tolerance, mindful awareness, and acceptance. A Crucial aspect of the therapy is finding a balance between acceptance of a patient just as they are and the need for the patient to change in order to have a “life worth living.”

One of the major premises of DBT is that patients are doing the best they can, but engage in harmful thoughts and actions because they lack the skills necessary to build a life worth living. At CSTC the DBT approach is used primarily with adolescents to help with handling upsetting feelings and coming to terms with life as it is experienced. Mindfulness, or awareness of one’s feelings, behaviors, and thoughts, is the core component of DBT and is the starting place for teaching the rest of the skills. Both individual and group approaches are used to present DBT to adolescents at CSTC, including DBT Group, individual therapy, DBT skills in the milieu, and special DBT events. Often individual DBT will assist an individual in skill acquisition and use, whereas group settings give the opportunity for processing, trying new skills, and experiencing alternative outcomes. Individual work can also assist in identifying obstacles and patterns that have been problematic in the past. The DBT group focuses mainly on the four key areas of core mindfulness skills, interpersonal effectiveness skills, emotion regulation skills, and distress tolerance skills. Adolescents at CSTC have many opportunities to practice these abilities as they develop, whether in Recreation Therapy, on home pass, or on the cottage each of these challenges are present daily. Please do not hesitate to contact the Program Director to ask more about how DBT is used in each cottage program.

References / Resources:

Linehan, M. M. & Dimeff, L. (2001). [Dialectical Behavior Therapy in a nutshell](#), *The California Psychologist*, 34, 10-13.

Miller, A.L., Rathus, J.H. & Linehan, M.M. (2007). [Dialectical Behavior Therapy with Suicidal Adolescents](#). Guilford Press, New York, N.Y.

<http://behavioraltech.org/index.cfm?CFID=15306394&CFTOKEN=73462845>